

"Phil's story" – a true story

1) Read this story and underline all the things that led / contributed to 'Phil' becoming homeless

"I come from a dysfunctional family background; my parents separated when I was still very young. I had difficulties at school too, and I was sent to a school where my emotional and behavioural needs could be given attention, around more people like myself.

For some of the time, I was sent to boarding school out of Hertfordshire as well, miles away from my Mum and the rest of the family while they were growing up. I started sneaking downstairs and drinking – wherever I was staying I would find the alcohol. I was only about 11, but it helped.

Once I was about 13 or 14, I started going out and experimenting more. I started to take cannabis – it gave me security and made me feel like myself. I started hanging out with some guys who were stealing cars and stuff, and I started getting arrested for criminal damage.

I couldn't be myself because I wasn't accepted. In fact, I had hidden myself for so long, that even when I wanted to be myself, I didn't really know who I was. It was easier to be myself with drink and drugs.

I really resented my Mum; I didn't feel she'd taken care of me, or done anything for me. In the end, the last straw for my mum came when she was on holiday – I stole her car and wrote it off. That was when I became homeless, because she'd had enough. I was 18.

I stayed for a little while at Open Door, a nightshelter in St Albans. But now I was with others like me again and was getting drunk every night. I experimented with methadone [prescribed drug for heroin users] at this time. I was difficult to handle, shouting a lot and sometimes violent. I got banned from that nightshelter after assaulting a member of staff and so I was homeless, and homeless again!

I'd also got involved with heroin and crack – they nullified the bad feelings, and gave me something in their place – a buzz, happiness. That's what I thought life was about; getting a buzz and feeling happy.

Then I got in touch with staff at Watford New Hope Trust. They were apprehensive because they'd found out some stuff about me from Open Door. But they accepted me, and I stayed at The Sanctuary nightshelter. Even though I was so often angry and shouting at them, they gave me new hope.

But I started doing things like burgling houses – the lowest of the low, and was back on drugs. I went to prison.

After several attempts, with the help of staff at Watford New Hope Trust, I finally went for an interview at Teen Challenge (a Christian centre where young people can rebuild their lives). They had a place for me in just two days' time, so I had to stop the drink, drunks, and even the smoking, all in two days.

Teen Challenge is all about rehab, dealing with the surface problems but also the inner causes. It helps people with life-controlling problems, transforming them into model citizens. It's life-changing. My life has been turned around. I'm even reconciled with my family now. I'm so thankful to all the people that God's put in my life. And now, I want to help other people."

Now answer these questions:

2) What do you think was the turning point for Phil? _____

3) If Phil hadn't received the support he did receive, what could have happened? _____

Note: this is a true story but Phil's name has been changed.